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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the initiatives, policies, and problems encountered by Clarion University (Pennsylvania) in its efforts to plan to increase equity and diversity. The development of the initiative is reviewed from its beginning in 1990 through conferences held in 1992 and 1997, and including the development of six major goals; a meeting on staffing diversity; implementation of the Building Bridges program, designed to promote communication and understanding between Clarion students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds; development of an interdisciplinary Black Studies minor in 1995; and university/community workshops, entertainment activities, and scholarly programs. Policy and procedure statements on the following four topics are described: (1) sexual harassment, (2) nondiscrimination, (3) faculty searches, and (4) disabilities. Four problems encountered in the effort are also recounted. These included resignation of the initiative's first director, only partial success of programs and workshops, slow improvement in hiring of women and minimal improvement in minority hiring, and lack of receptivity to minority groups by local residents. The paper concludes that, after eight years of aggressive initiatives and programming concerning diversity, only minimal progress can be reported. (Contains 35 references.) (DB)

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MOVING TOWARD DIVERSITY: A MID-SIZE UNIVERSITY'S INITIATIVES, POLICIES, AND PROBLEMS

by

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INTRODUCTION

Recognizing the necessary connection between diversity and academic excellence has enjoyed an increasing popularity among the leaders of higher education in the country. In the state of Pennsylvania, Chancellor H. McCormick of the State System of Higher Education proclaimed in the System's equity plan, "no longer are we content to limit our consideration of equity and diversity to quantitative measures and demographics. Rather, this document maps out an organizational change strategy which affects the entire State System. It challenges everyone to personally involved in enriching our System through support of enhanced diversity and pluralism." Clarion University *, one of

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* Clarion University is located within the Borough of Clarion some two miles north of Interstate 80 at Exit 9 and 10, and is approximately two and one half hours' driving time from urban centers of Pittsburgh, Erie, and Youngstown. It is a multi-purpose institution with an enrollment of approximately 6000 students, offering associate degrees in five areas, more than 70 baccalaureate programs leading to degrees in the arts, fine arts, nursing sciences, and 12 graduate programs leading to master's degrees in arts, business administration, education, library science, nursing and sciences.

the System's 17 universities has joined in the effort of pursuing equity since 1990. In Fall 1998, "An Equity Plan: In Pursuit of Community" was published by the Office of Social Equity representing the congregated effort and accomplishments of the university community in the area of social equity. During the past eight years, those concerned members of the university community have confronted many challenges, undergone great adversity, endured a great deal of discouragement, and celebrated numerous successes. It is the purpose of this paper to discuss the initiatives, policies, and problems the university community has experienced in our effort to move forward to diversity, a goal so central and so critical to our institution's mission for educating our graduates to be productive, contributing members of an increasingly diverse society and workforce.

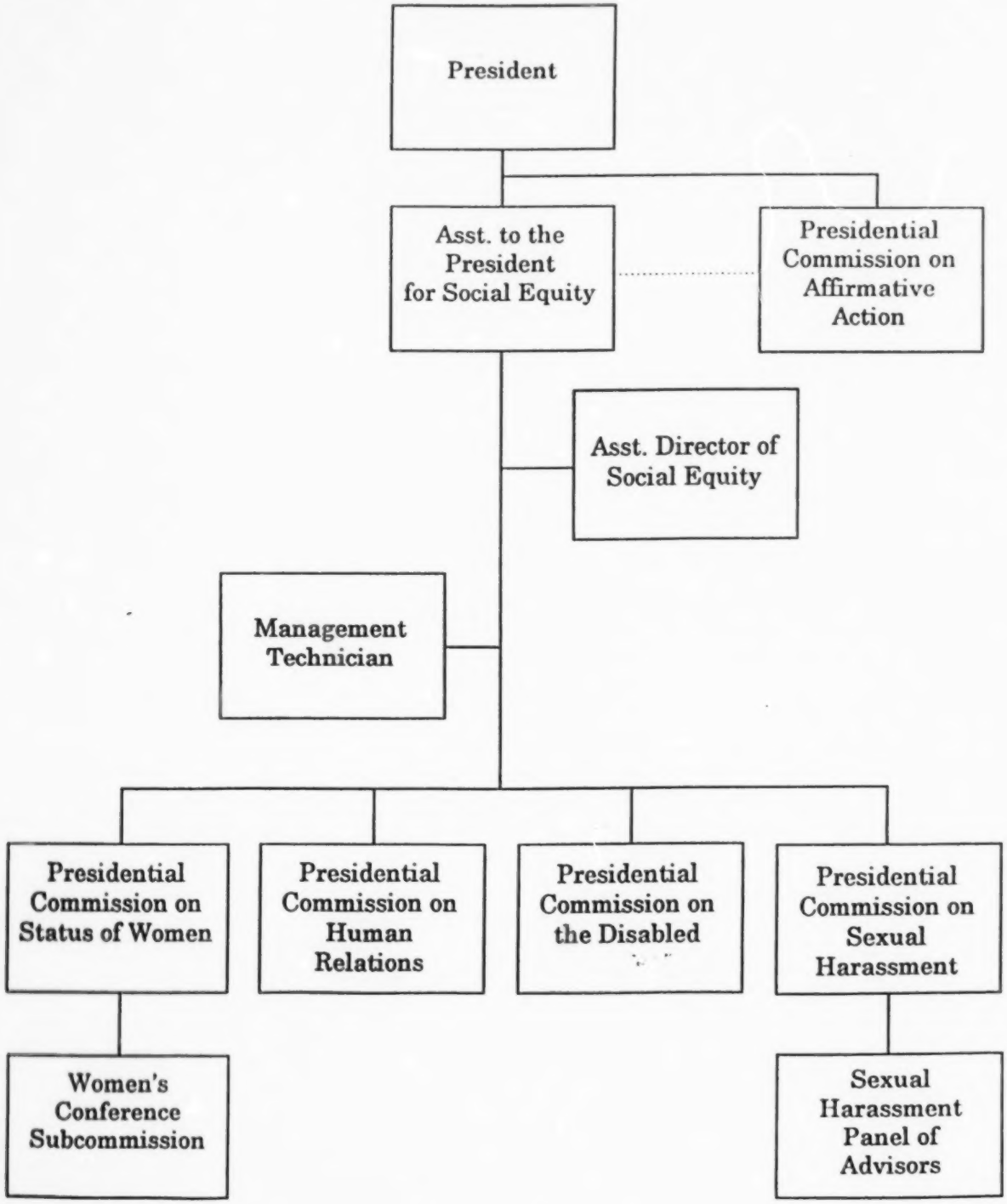
Initiatives

The origin a large scale university-wide effort toward diversity should be attributed to Dr. Diane Reinhard, the university's 14th president. Upon her inauguration to the presidency in August 1990, Dr. Reinhard initiated a persistent campaign toward diversity. In her inaugural address, on April 27, 1991 she stated, "As we attend our commitment to diversity on this campus, let us create connections which will lead to a greater appreciation for a variety of intellectual perspectives and a deeper understanding of cultural differences." In August,

1991 a special assistant to the President for social equity was installed to head the office of Social Equity and to direct the workings of the four university-wide Presidential Commissions: Presidential Commission on Status of Women, Presidential Commission on Human Relations, Presidential Commission on the Disabled, and Presidential Commission on Sexual Harassment. Alongside with the office of social equity, the Presidential Commission on Affirmative Action was established with presidentially appointed members to serve as an advisory board reporting directly to the president on development and implementation of the university's Affirmative Action plan and related policies and practices. (See Chart 1, Organizational Chart.)

To begin with the initiation of social equity effort, in Fall 1992, a university-wide survey on campus climate and diversity was conducted on students, faculty, and staff of the university by TRD, Inc. In November 1992, a report entitled, "Campus Climate and Diversity at Clarion University: A Current Status Report" was released. The findings indicated that the members of the university community recognize that multiple cultural education as one of the most important issues facing the university, however prejudice and bias played a decisive role in the university environment. More than half of the university population had no exposure to people of different cultures and ethnicities and more than half of them neither attended a professional training event conducted by professionals of a racial minority

Office of Social Equity
Organizational Chart


President
Asst. to the President for Social Equity
Presidential Commission on Affirmative Action
Asst. Director of Social Equity
Management Technician
Presidential Commission on Status of Women
Presidential Commission on Human Relations
Presidential Commission on the Disabled
Presidential Commission on Sexual Harassment
Women's Conference Subcommission
Sexual Harassment Panel of Advisors

May 1, 1998

nor ever sought advise from them. Their inability to acknowledge their own implicit and explicit cultural, racial, gender biases was an important issue to address. Recommendations were (1) to develop university-wide multicultural team to build coalition and consensus, (2) to change the perception of diversity from "win-lose" to "win-win" proposition, and (3) to address heterogeneity within racial, ethnic, cultural groups regards to attitudes, ideologies, and action in relation to creating a diverse climate within the university and over-all Clarion community. It was emphasized that the benefits and opportunities of diversity must be marketed to the campus and the broader community. The President and senior level managers must take steps toward developing, monitoring, and enforcing incentive programs and marketing diversity.

As the result of the Reality '92 and Vision '97 conference held September 17-18, 1992 at Cross Creek Resort, Titusville, Pennsylvania, the social equity office released five goal statements:

1. to increase the number of minority students by 50% before '97;
2. to establish a faculty exchange program with a historically black college and university, leading to participation by 50% in academic departments by '97;
3. will require of its first-year students a course on intellectual and cultural diversity;
4. will provide full material support for women's studies. By 97 it will be a full department with majors and minors;

5. will employ a minority counselor in the Counseling center to address the personal needs of minority personnel and students.

6. will assist integration of women's studies & minorities' contribution into the curriculum. It will also assist faculty in developing an understanding of the pedagogical needs of diverse groups.

As we can see, the goals were quite specific and ambitious. They targeted student groups, women studies, minority counseling, curriculum infusion, and multi-cultural education.

On Thursday, December 9, 1993 a staffing and diversity meeting was called by the Provost requesting the attendance and representation of all departments who were serious about hiring for next year. It was announced that the President, the Provost, deans, department chairs, search committee chairs, and members of the Presidential Commission on Affirmative Action would be in attendance. During the meeting, President Reinhard announced the university's decision to adopt the recommendation of PCOAA on faculty hiring. The recommendation was that "searches which do not result in hiring from a protected class should be approved only in unusual circumstances." This action had been the most drastic measure the university ever taken to promote diversity. Until today, the recommendation remains at the top of the PCOAA's suggestions to the President for implementing and advancing social equity initiatives.

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* Protected class faculty are comprised of women, minorities, individuals with disabilities, and Vietnam war veterans.

On May 1, 1995 the Building Bridges Program which was designed to promote communication and understanding between Clarion Students with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, and to create a partnership between student affairs and academic affairs linking the classroom with the campus community, was initiated. The program would employ a group of student ambassadors to lead discussions on race and ethnic issues, and to speak on personal experiences dealing with prejudice to classes which requested their presentations.

In Fall 1995, a Black Studies minor was developed in the History department with an interdisciplinary mixture of courses from eight departments: History, Music, Speech Communication and Theatre, Sociology, Art, English, French, and Geography.

To complete the initiatives on diversity, many workshops speeches, entertainment activities, scholarly programs, and conferences were made available on campus to the university community and the local community members on a regular basis. Events such as sexual harassment training workshops, training on ethnic intimidation and cultural awareness, presentation on Disability Act, Annual Women's Conference, Minority Faculty Development Fund, Minority Recruitment and scholars program, call for social equity proposals, Speakers for equity luncheon series, equity forums, minority women scholars program were some of the aggressive programs available to us relating to various issues

of diversity.

POLICIES

At the present time, there are policy statements available to the university community on sexual harassment, non-discrimination, faculty searches, and disabilities. They provide necessary guidelines to deal with those issues:

1. Sexual Harassment Policies and Procedures was published jointly by the Office of Social Equity and the Presidential Commission on Sexual Harassment and approved by the Council of Trustees on January 9, 1997. It clearly states that "harassment of students and employees based on sex is unacceptable and will not tolerated." The policy included statements on the definition of sexual harassment, complaint procedures, and resolution procedures, sanction procedures and remedies. And it superseded previous policy statement(s) on this subject.

2. Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures was published by the Office of Social Equity in consultation with Presidential Commission on Affirmative Action, Presidential Commission on Disabilities, Presidential Commission on Human Relations, Presidential Commission on Sexual Harassment, Presidential Commission on Status of Women. The policy was approved by the Council of Trustees on January 9, 1997. It applies to complaints alleging discrimination because of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, veteran status, and sexual orientation. It

is intended to ensure fairness and consistency in the university-'s administration of its policies and practices.

3. Handbook for Faculty Searches: Policy and Procedures, References and Guidelines was published by the Office of Social Equity, April 30, 1998. It provides guidelines, sample forms, and suggestions designed to help the search teams to attract a diverse group of well-qualified candidates. The President stated forcefully in her letter that "the university's responsibility for selecting qualified and dedicated faculty and staff and providing an intellectual and social climate conducive to the fullest development of students. As part of our shared responsibility for advancing these goals, it is imperative that we seek to enhance the diversity of our faculty. Searches must reflect a commitment to securing minority, physically challenged, and women."

4. A University Handbook on Disabilities, 5th edition, was developed by the Commission on Disabilities in January 1998. According to the President, it was designed to be a guide for faculty, staff, and students "in deepening their understanding of disabilities and in facilitating their efforts to determine appropriate accommodations." The sections including traumatic brain injury, attention deficit disorder (ADD), and psychological disorders were added in addition to the existing sections in the previous editions: hearing impairment, learning disability, mobility impairment, communication impairment, visual impairment, seizure disorder, and chronic health impairment. Additionally, a

statement on where and how to seek help and how to file a complaint for discrimination on the basis of disability was included at the end.

PROBLEMS

With all the aggressive and all encompassing efforts toward diversity, the progress in diversity at the university seems quite minimal and still has with many obstacles.

First of the all, the first person appointed to the position of Assistant to President for Social equity resigned to accept a better position in nearby metropolitan area of Pittsburgh in Spring 1992 and then returned to the position approximately one semester later. But at times during the second semester of the 1992-93 academic year, he suddenly resigned from the position with the official reason that "he wanted to be with his family." The circumstances surrounding his departure were unclear and unsettling to the university community. It seemed to us that the resistance to the idea of social equity and negative criticism toward the office were very prevalent and exerted a tremendous pressure on the incumbent of the position. The position was vacant for sometime until an interim Assistant to the President for social equity was appointed. Fortunately, a nationwide search was conducted by the university for approximately one year. As the result, Dr. Jocelind Gant was appointed as the Assistant to the President for Social Equity in August 1994, and

she has been with us ever since.

Secondly, in the area of programs and workshops, the success was only partially obtained. In a letter to the Council of Trustees' Presidential Review Committee, the PCOAA praised the President for her leadership in the area of increased campus wide events promoting social equity. They said, "Indeed, the university community has experienced a great variety of programs to promote positive attitudes and attempt to eliminate isms." However, according to PCOAA report in 1992-93 and 1993-94, the workshops and programs were attended only by the "converted" and there seemed to be a general feeling of apathy among university students and employees that it was useless to try and affect change because nothing could make a difference. It was recommended that a formal incentives and rewards program which focused on attracting faculty, staff, and students to workshops and other offerings regarding social equity should be developed and implemented.

Thirdly, in the area of hiring women and minorities, the statistics indicated that a slow, yet positive trend in the equity for women might be at the very beginning at Clarion. However, minorities were still not as fortunate. For example, from 1988 to 1993, minority faculty increased from 27 to 29, minority bargaining unit members decreased from 10 to 9, minority management increased 1. In the actual hiring process, subtle sabotage occurred often in the form of remarks calculated to dissuade minority candidates from accepting positions at Clarion.

Those who chose to accept the offers resigned within a year or two due to hostile treatment in the university and in the community. For example, in 1992-93 year, the university hired three African American tenure track faculty members but lost two. In the area of promotion, minorities endured many difficulties and were still not being promoted at levels that would be considered acceptable. It was recommended that issues related to the promotion and retention of protected class faculty must be addressed from many perspectives, including: 1) official acknowledgement of the importance of social equity issues in a faculty member's performance of university service; 2) affirmative action by the president and the faculty in promoting faculty members who derive from protected classes; and 3) mentoring for protected class faculty regarding promotion processes.

Finally, the local community surrounding the university was not receptive to members of various minority groups. Although not openly hostile, the community at large did not reach out and embrace people from various racial and ethnic groups. The result was that individuals from various racial and ethnic groups often either lived elsewhere or stayed at Clarion only for a few years before moving on to a more accepting or tolerant community. It was recommended that the university should present programs for the local community regrading sensitivity to social equity issues, and the local community should be encouraged to become involved in the development of programs focused on social equity

issues.

CONCLUSION

In short, after eight years of aggressive initiatives and programming in the area of diversity at Clarion University, only minimal progress is noted. Feelings of alienation from the community and university campus linger among minority personnel. Affirmative action initiatives still suffer from a low-profile on campus. Strong advocacy of social equity issues by its proponents is not always embraced by the community as a whole. Although many in the high management positions are taking leadership roles on social equity issues, but their awareness seems to have difficulty expanding to the rank and file and the community in general. Participation in social equity initiatives and programs by the university personnel is only motivated by institutional mandates and by legal requirements, not by their embracing the ideal of diversity.

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